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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6055  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 000078

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WHA/CAR FOR ALAIN NORMAN  
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DRL FOR GREG MAGGIO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2018  
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [INRB](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [XL](#) [VC](#)  
SUBJECT: ST. VINCENT: RAPE CHARGES AGAINST PM GONSALVES  
DISMISSED

REF: 08 BRIDGETOWN 58

Classified By: DCM O.P. Garza for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This cable is an action request; please see Para 8.

¶2. (C) On February 4, 2008 the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines "discontinued" the criminal rape case filed against St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves. The case was earlier made public by the Prime Minister himself, who made statements denying the charges, and identifying the accuser by name. The accuser's lawyer expressed deep disappointment at the DPP's decision, and renewed her request for Embassy assistance, this time asking for help in the safeguarding and testing of evidence. End Summary.

PM Goes Public  
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¶3. (C) Nicole Sylvester, the President of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Human Rights Association (SVGHRA), told PolOff she filed a private criminal prosecution for the counts of rape and indecent assault on her client's behalf on January 31, 2008 (reftel). Within hours of filing the case, the Prime Minister's office issued a press release denying all charges and labeling the accusation as politically motivated. The Prime Minister's press release identified the accuser by name, even though Sylvester had filed the charges privately in an attempt to protect her client's identity, and claimed that she had not released any information to the media. The accuser (a police officer) was subsequently transferred out of the Special Services Unit (SSU) and is currently on sick leave.

End of the Saga?  
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¶4. (U) Following a week of media hype and public speculation, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Colin Williams (also an important Embassy contact), announced on February 4th that he had taken over the case and determined that it should be "discontinued". He cited the accuser's failure to provide a written statement to police, multiple inconsistencies in her oral statements and statements by witnesses, and the lack of forensic evidence, as leading to his decision.

¶5. (C) In a private phone conversation with PolOff, Williams elaborated that in addition to the contradictions in the

accuser's oral statements, she did not actually allege rape until twenty days after the alleged incident on January 3rd. In addition, Williams noted that the accuser is known to have made allegations against supervisors in two previous jobs (with Immigration both in St. Vincent and on Union island), which were both deemed to lack substance.

¶16. (C) The police officer's lawyer, Nicole Sylvester, told PolOff via TelCon that she is considering requesting "judicial review" of the DPP's decision, which means a magistrate would review the DPP's actions in the case and decide if he erred and the case should continue. According to Sylvester, the Chief Magistrate in the case, Simone Young, intimated to her that she too was the subject of intimidation and "pressure," and confided in Sylvester, "I may lose my job" (if she rules the case be continued). Sylvester further claimed that the DPP refused to grant her access to the witness statements, and only asked for a written statement from the accuser after the charges had already been filed. While Ms. Sylvester stated she enjoys a good working relationship with the DPP, she speculated that he was under enormous pressure from high-level officials to take over and dismiss the case.

Evidence Withheld  
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¶17. (C) In the original telephone conversation with PolOff on January 31st (reftel), Sylvester mentioned that the police had demanded her client turn in the uniform she was wearing at the time of the alleged incident, but that she had intentionally handed over the wrong uniform to police. Sylvester told PolOff on February 5th that she still has the uniform in question, which presumably contains forensic evidence that would support her client's claim of rape.

Sylvester reiterated that both she and her client do not believe that the evidence can be trusted with SVG authorities, and asked for USG assistance in transporting the evidence out of the country and in having it tested (Note: To do so would break the "chain of custody" and it is unlikely that any independent laboratory would be willing to test the samples. End note.)

¶18. (C) COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST: Considering that the accuser has refused to provide a written statement and has even withheld critical evidence, the DPP's decision appears fair and reasonable. The Prime Minister's decision to release the name of the alleged victim/accuser raises additional concerns, and shows the general lack of sensitivity surrounding victim's rights in rape cases in the region. Given Post's experience with law enforcement officials in SVG, it is difficult to determine whether Sylvester's concerns of the possible evidence-tampering are valid or not. Post seeks Department guidance on this latest request for Embassy assistance, and also talking points in the event that the requests being made for Embassy assistance become public. END COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST.  
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